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FEBRUARY MEETING.

The Second Monthly Meeting of the Spring Half-Session will be held on Wednesday, February 10th, at headquarters, St. Bride Institute, Bride Lane, E.C., when Mr. A. J. Philip, Librarian, Gravesend Public Library, will read a paper on **Lending Library Bookbinding**. To facilitate discussion, the Committee have obtained from Mr. Philip the following abstract of his remarks:—

Lending and reference. Comparative bindings. Requirements for a lending library binding—opposing the generally accepted ideas. Component parts of the book, and its binding: a binding to match required. Life of a book. Dirt versus wear and tear. Binding from the quires—relative cost and advantages. Specimens and criticism. Samples will be shown and examined of the following binders' work:—Messrs. Banting, Chivers, Hains, and Heyner. It is also hoped that some of these will be in the "forwarding" stage.

Mr. S. A. Hatcher, Canning Town Library, will open the discussion. The room will be open at 7.30; the meeting will begin at 8.

Visitors will be welcomed.

JANUARY MEETING.

An historical meeting in the annals of the L.A.A. was held at the London School of Economics on the 13th ult. It was not so much that there was a large attendance—indeed, a greater number would have been welcome—but the lecturer, the chairman and his supporters, together with the addresses, made the event one which will be long remembered by the thinking members who were present. The subject, "Books in relation to National Efficiency," was one which gave Mr. Sidney Lee an opportunity of bestowing upon his audience some results of his wide researches in literature and national progress, undertaken in the preparation of his biographies of Shakespeare and Queen Victoria. He proclaimed a high ideal of efficiency, and showed how necessary book knowledge was in stretching after that ideal.

The lecture (which we have the privilege of printing in this

issue) should awake the assistant to a sense of his responsibility in the dissemination of literature among the people. It should make him appreciate the important part libraries, especially public libraries, should take in the equipment of the individual for the making of an efficient citizen. It is to be feared that a number of assistants join issue with those persons who regard public libraries as storehouses of amusement and light entertainment only. A thoughtful perusal of Mr. Lee's address will correct this view and emphasize the real seriousness of the necessity for providing good literature, and for training the people to desire the good in preference to the vapid and weak.

The Chairman, Mr. J. Mackinder (Principal of the School), in moving a vote of thanks to Mr. Lee, gave a very inspiring address showing the applicability of the subject to library assistants. In a happily drawn illustration he showed how Mr. Lee embodied in himself the three dominant notes of his lecture, i.e., in Literature, his life of Shakespeare; in Life, his biography of Queen Victoria; and in Efficiency, his editorship of the Dictionary of National Biography. He said that in the spread of literature it was the librarian's privilege to perform the complimentary function to the performance of the writer. The writer produced books and the librarian distributed them through their proper channels. He insisted upon high ideals, and urged the importance of the profession, and its influence upon public efficiency.

Our much respected honorary member, Dr. Richard Garnett, in seconding the vote, dwelt upon reference libraries and their relation to the subject. What the commissariat department was to the Army, librarians were to education—they were the storehouses from which individuals could obtain intellectual sustenance. Here was to be found that which would make them competent to deal with the tasks of life, and it was the librarian's duty to arrange this wealth of knowledge so as to make it conveniently and readily accessible to all who had need.

A vote of thanks to Mr. Mackinder for his able chairmanship, moved by Mr. Rees and seconded by Mr. Roebuck, together with the usual announcements, concluded the business.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Our usual page of Notes and Comments is held over through lack of space.

APPOINTMENT.

TOPPING, Mr. F. W., to be Librarian of the Public Library, Loughborough.

BOOKS IN RELATION TO NATIONAL EFFICIENCY.

BY SIDNEY LEE.

So that we may understand what the subject precisely is, I will begin with definitions. By national efficiency I understand that state of being in which all the component parts of a nation are seeking to develop and to use to the best advantage the varied capacities and the varied opportunities that they have at their command. National efficiency is ability to adapt means to the best ends on the part of the nation. It signifies readiness to face emergencies effectively. It means the putting of our resources of every kind—intellectual, moral, and material—to uses of greatest profit, alike to the present and to the future.

Well, then, what do I mean by books? I do not mean washing-books, or bank-books, or account book books, whether blank or filled with MS. hieroglyphics. By books I mean, of course, printed books, such as you handle daily. Broadly speaking, books are records of experience—real or imagined. If you think it over, that definition will cover all printed books, from a technical treatise on the making of steam engines—which embodies a vast amount of real experience—to a lyrical poem—which embodies imagined experience—or a novel, which mingles real and imagined experience together. Now experience is the force which makes life possible. Without experience the infant on his entry into the world would not live a day. The essential facts of experience *may* be transmitted from one to another by word of mouth. Books may not be absolutely necessary to the circulation among humanity of all the facts of experience needful to its conservation. But history proves that, even though books may not be the *sole* instrument employed in spreading knowledge of experience, they are the main instrument; they alone give permanence to the facts of experience, especially to the facts that concern the intellectual and spiritual interests of mankind. Books alone enable facts of that kind to be fully understood and developed. Without such records, of experience as books supply, progress in human affairs would be a meaningless word. Without such records we should still be groping in the wilderness outside the gates of the Garden of Eden, like our first parents, Adam and Eve: we should be mere mindless organisms, knowing little more about right and wrong, or pain and pleasure, or the things of the mind, than monkeys or kangaroos. Personally, I fear I see little force in the contrast sometimes drawn between life and literature. Literature and life, say some, are two different worlds, and life is the better of the two. This seems to me to be a confusion of terms. Literature I regard as recorded life—a part of life itself—and ought no more to be treated as another species of created things than the air we breathe ought to be treated as a different substance to the air compressed in pneumatic tubes, and employed for purposes of propulsion. True literature is compressed life, but it is life all the same.

I do not propose to leave you long in any doubt as to the relation in which literature and books stand in my opinion to national efficiency. I believe that books of the right kind make directly for national efficiency. The more books of the right kind are read, the more efficient a nation becomes.

To deny that books of the right kind contribute to human efficiency, or that the great books of a nation contribute to the nation's efficiency, is like a refusal to acknowledge that heat comes from the sun, or motive power from steam. No man nor woman who contests that sort of proposition deserves a hearing.

Books do not all contribute alike to efficiency. Experience is not all of it good, nor all of it beneficial. Experience concerns itself with sin, crime, vice, cowardice, perhaps even to a greater degree than with the

cardinal virtues. Consequently, books record experience of evil and of pain, as well as experience of good and of pleasure. This is inevitable. But books which treat of experience of evil are not necessarily bad literature. Only when books record what is injurious to the welfare of humanity, or what retards the true progress of humanity, in a manner that induces the reader to encourage or to practice what is injurious to the welfare of himself and fellow men, or what is obstructive to progress, it is only then that books are harmful to society, and go to the making of national inefficiency rather than of national efficiency. When one considers books in relation to national efficiency one has to remember that books of evil and unprofitable tendency exist, but that their number is small compared with those of a good and profitable tendency, and do not largely affect the question we are discussing.

It is with bad books as with disease: we cannot shut our eyes to the presence of disease, but health is, after all, the more normal condition, and, as a rule, disease only works havoc on a serious scale when the physical constitutions which it menaces are inadequately equipped to resist its raids.

There are books which destroy, or weaken, or distort the moral sense, the sense of decency, or the sense of reverence. I will not dispute that. Only let us be fair to books even of this particular class. I will not go so far as some critics have gone, and say that there is no book so bad that it has not some good in it. But I will say that there is no book so bad that one in robust mental health may not read it without suffering harm.

We have all made the acquaintance in police-court proceedings, of boys charged with highway robberies, and we have learnt from the evidence that perusal of romances about Dick Turpin or Jack Sheppard immediately prompted them to crime. Such cases are rare, and I don't believe the books are greatly to blame in themselves. Far more to blame are the moral training and the moral condition of these youthful students—a training and condition with which it is improbable books had much to do.

In a healthy-minded community public opinion will do everything to discourage the circulation of books of an evil tendency, and encourage the circulation of books of a good tendency. But in this regard men must work out their own salvation. Bad books are fewer than good books, and it is only in exceptional cases that a natural turn for reading is other than a preservative against moral disease. Over and over again have men gratefully acknowledged that books kept them in youth (in old days) from the prize-ring, or the dog-pit, and (in our own time) from the tavern or saloon. Over and over again have books held men aloof from degrading recreations and demoralising society. In normal conditions I do not see how close association with great and noble thought and with all the large experience which great writers offer us can make us other than impatient of what is ignoble and debasing.

Of this rest assured, coercive legislation brings more dangers in its train than any that it may remove. Censorship of the press, in almost all its shapes, does harm. It so easily develops into an instrument of tyranny, into a mode of suppressing books and opinions which are not absolutely bad, but are bad in the opinion of the censors, the authorities, the administrators of government. Those who hold free-trade principles may think protectionists' views to be pernicious; protectionists may hold the same opinion of free trade principles. Were the country governed autocratically the views held by the government—whether it were protectionist or free trade—would be imposed on authors by force, and opposition in print would be suppressed. That is the worst fate that can befall thought and literature, which is the fruit of thought. The utmost freedom is essential to the welfare of the intellect and of letters. Whatever risks flow

from the dissemination of bad books are to be counteracted, not by forcible suppression, but by a right-minded public opinion acting without restraint of coercive law.

Books never can be relied upon to contribute to the national efficiency except where everybody is at perfect liberty to publish whatever he think fit. The natural law of the survival of the fittest must be allowed free scope.

Very many books are the reverse of good in the sense that they are inefficient, of bad workmanship or quality. Happily the life of inefficient books is short, they do not survive. On the other hand nothing is longer-lived than a book that is in all senses good. I hardly think books that are morally and spiritually bad do more injury to a nation than books which are feeble and vapid. If history taught us that by suppressing what is bad in literature, we should be able to prevent the production of any books save those that are excellent, some of us might be inclined to yield our scruples, and vote for a censorship. If a censorship could be relied upon to prohibit the writing of incompetent books, books quite blameless from the moral point of view, but blameworthy from their vapidity, their inutility; if every scribbler of valueless poetry and valueless fiction, if every writer who mistook his chaff for grain could be deprived by law of the further use of pens, ink, and paper, then I think a good deal might be said in favour of coercive legislation in the matter of books. But it is outside the scope of law to aim at suppressing mere vacuity or thoughtless folly. Other means than legislation must be relied on there.

The need of discouraging vapidity in books is great and urgent in the cause of national efficiency. The listlessness, the mental torpor, which is provoked by the very cheap literature of the railway bookstall, is to my thinking far more perilous to the mental strength of the people than whole libraries of books like those of Boccaccio or Casanova, which are popularly regarded as forbidden fruits of literature, and are deemed by many injurious to the morality of the people. The empty personal gossip, which infests to a greater and greater degree every day, the cheap press of this country, the vapid twaddle is a serious danger to the intellectual health of the people. It discourages healthy exercise of the intellect. It is harmless in the sense that it is not poisonous. That is no argument in its favour. Weak tea, or toast and water are quite innocent beverages; but one can live very well on very moderate doses of them, and if one fall into the habit of drenching oneself in them, one's constitution marches to perdition.

The worst of inane reading is that it is capable of destroying the taste for really good and useful reading. It engenders degeneration of the critical faculty. The books that contribute to national efficiency are books that invigorate the intellect and the imagination. Books, that cost some genuine energy to get through, books that elevate the mind, that give one something to think about: these are the books that this evening I have in my mind; these are the books that make for national efficiency.

I will not consider in this connection mere handbooks of technical knowledge which may stimulate mental exertion and at the same time help the reader to get a livelihood. Books of that kind are very useful, and the more closely they are studied the better for all concerned. I will consider books that serve a somewhat loftier purpose; books that are literature pure and simple; books of history, of criticism, of fiction, of poetry, that embody the best thought and emotion of which humanity is capable; books that humanise their readers, that make them more humane, that give them a living interest in the humanities, in opposition to the barbarities of life. These books may appear to exert

little or no influence on the practical affairs of the world. They may not appreciably sharpen the wits; they may not appreciably improve a man's capacity for business; one may be able to make his fortune on the Stock Exchange without the smallest knowledge of the works of Shakespeare or Milton, or Tennyson or Browning. One may be a pattern of all the domestic virtues without much reading of Gibbon or Macaulay. But no one who goes through life turning a deaf ear to the voice of great literature realizes an altogether admirable ideal of citizenship. His aims and aspirations are always of the earth, earthy; his ideals of conduct are uninspiring, are narrowed by his own narrow experience. He lacks that love of beauty and order and knowledge, for its own sake, which is always accessible in literature, and is essential to the perfecting of civilization; he goes through life only half conscious of his faculties and his opportunities, only half alive. The past is a sealed book to him; he forms no estimate of the future. He lives solely in the present, solely for himself; he eats and drinks, and to-morrow he dies.

I fear that a large mass of our population is in this parlous state; a larger mass I almost fear than in any other civilized country in the world. That fact is the more deplorable because we are the inheritors of as large a body of great literature as any of the peoples of the world, and failure on the part of the English people to study, with due appreciation, English literature, which is capable of conferring benefit upon them, is to waste a great inheritance. It is, moreover, to throw away great opportunities, to diminish our national reputation, and to retard the progress of our national efficiency.

National efficiency is promoted by good education. I am not going into so forbidding a topic as education to-night. But what should be one of the ends of education? It should encourage the cultivation on the part of a nation of its self-respect. Every efficient nation should always pay due honour to all that makes for its prestige, for its good name. For a people to decry or, worse still, to ignore those great achievements of fellow countrymen which confer glory on its name is to fly in the face of nature, and to defy any of nature's laws is to be inefficient and to encourage inefficiency.

Of course victories on the battlefield, extensions of empire, successful rule of subject races, are achievements which foster a people's self-respect at home and prestige abroad. But military and colonial triumphs do not always contribute to national self-respect and prestige to the extent that is popularly claimed for them. One has to take into consideration in estimating their value, their causes and their effects. If they are the fruit of mere brute force or of mere numerical superiority, if they are inspired by greed of gold, if they are liable to reversal at no distant date, if there exists any reasonable doubt of their finality, then, however brilliant the triumphs of arms or of physical endurance may seem at the moment, they offer no permanent contribution to a nation's self-respect or prestige—they do not promote a nation's genuine efficiency. The conquest of Poland, and its partition by the rulers of Russia, Austria, and Germany, did nothing for the self-respect or prestige of the German, Russian, or Austrian peoples.

On a very different footing stand the unmistakable triumphs of a nation's literature, science, or art. When a great work of literature, of science, or of art is once recognised without misgiving by all the world to extend the limits of endeavour that have already been reached by humanity, then that achievement confers impermanence on the nation to which its producer belongs, a glory about which no dispute is possible. The self-respect of the producing nation is permanently increased, its prestige is strengthened for ever.

To the art of ancient Greece and modern Italy, those countries owe their lasting repute in a greater degree than to any other cause. England, though it has never been so conspicuous as some foreign nations in eminent artistic effort, has produced literature and science, which are universally acknowledged to be of supreme merit and moment. Newton in science, Shakespeare in literature, stand beyond all dispute at the apex respectively of the world's poetry and science. Their work is enshrined in books, and their books make for the prestige of the English name in the civilised world as notably as any half-dozen other facts in English history. Not the acquisition of the Indian empire, nor the victories of Trafalgar or Waterloo, nor the planting of American or the Australian colonies, have set the fame of England on a surer basis than the printed records of Shakespeare's or of Newton's work. Had Shakespeare and Newton never lived, English prestige would rest on a far lower plane than it rests to-day.

There are many other writers besides Newton and Shakespeare, though none in the same degree, who have built up our lasting prestige; and a recent event seems to suggest that we are at the moment far less conscious of the debt we owe our great writers than it becomes us to be or, what ought to be humiliating to us, than foreign nations are. The mind of a nation is obviously suffering from sluggishness or want of alertness, if, when a great man does intellectual labour which increases the renown of his country, his fellow countrymen are less active in acknowledging the value of his achievement than foreign observers and admirers.

England has, within the last few weeks, lost by death one of the greatest writers of books of the last century, one who did as much probably as any of the great philosophers of any race before him to systematize human knowledge and to indicate the bounds of man's intellectual capacity. Difference of opinion regarding portions of his work is permissible. In some directions he may have taken steps in which many are reluctant to follow him. He worked in the "dry light" of reason, and sought no other illumination. But by the simplicity of his life, by self-denying devotion to a great intellectual ideal, by resolute pursuit and realisation of the highest of all human aims—the discovery of the secret springs of progress and civilisation—Herbert Spencer achieved a universal reputation, of which we all in some measure enjoy the reflected brightness. I am much afraid that this fact has been more clearly recognised in foreign countries than at home. It would not be reasonable to expect all our population to be deep students of philosophy, but there are parts of Spencer's writings—his work on Education, for example—which appeals to every intelligent man and woman, and, if intellectual aspiration were widely diffused, then knowledge of Spencer's achievement would be so widely distributed that the whole community would pay, instinctively, respect to him and his writings. The nation would honour his memory by intuition.

Surprise, I understand, has been expressed in almost all civilised countries abroad that Herbert Spencer was suffered to join the great majority without any unmistakeable sign of national regard for his name, without any clear indication that the people knew precisely what was going forward in their midst, when his death set the last rivet to the jewel which his life's work added to the crown of England's intellectual glory. Our newspapers reported how, in almost every civilised country, the rulers—not merely leaders of thought, but leaders of the State—testified publicly to the genius of the departed hero. In Rome the King of Italy and his parliament joined together in paying tribute to Herbert Spencer, and offered expressions of condolence to us, the English people. Those expressions were hardly received in the spirit in which they were

sent. Messages of sympathy from foreign societies were forwarded and read to the Lord Mayor of London. But I have not heard that the Lord Mayor made any adequate response. London, the capital city of the Empire, was not formally represented at the great man's obsequies. Herbert Spencer went to his grave in England accompanied by no statesman of first rank, by no leader among us, by no man of such acknowledged eminence as fitly to represent the nation at large. Surprise, I say, has been expressed, especially by our French neighbours, at the indifference displayed in the presence of an event which touched our national prestige very nearly. The most enlightened writers of the French press have asserted—perhaps with some touch of exaggeration—that the death of a lucky jockey, or a well-known cricketer or football player, would have excited far more attention, far deeper emotion than the death of probably the profoundest thinker of a century.

There is, I say, some exaggeration in these strictures. The English press—or certainly the most respected portion of it—paid ungrudging tributes to Herbert Spencer's eminent services to philosophy. But I am afraid no general appreciation was betrayed of the supreme contribution which conspicuous intellectual genius in him, as in all other cases, makes to the stock of the nation's credit, and, thereby, to the nation's efficiency. No such full appreciation was manifested as would entirely relieve this country of the insinuation freely levelled against it abroad in connection with Herbert Spencer's death, that England, whatever else it is, is, as a whole, a school of ignorance, of intellectual murkiness, rather than of intellectual brilliance. Our general attitude to Herbert Spencer's work in life was, we fear, faithfully reflected on the placards of a London evening newspaper, which bore, on the evening of his death, this legend, displayed in bold types, all of equal size :—

LIFE-STORY OF A PHILOSOPHER.

ALL THE FINALS.

Those words, "All the Finals," which are thrust upon our attention at every street corner in every city of the kingdom, would not, I think, form an unsuitable text for—a part, at any rate, of my present address.

The association of those three words with the announcement of an event which profoundly affected this country's intellectual prestige is, no doubt, an inevitable incident of journalism which takes for its topic all that interests humanity, and cannot fail to be a monstrous jumble. But the peculiar incongruity of allying so noble and elevated a piece of intelligence as the career of Herbert Spencer with the ignoble and debased reports of the latest state of the betting market is a typical admission, is a lamentable confession of intellectual levity, of popular lack of respect for the things of the mind, for the things alone that tell in the long run in a nation's history. Thought must be sadly tangled when no endeavour is made to distinguish between what is evanescent and unsubstantial and what is lasting and substantial. The removal from the world of a great intellectual luminary, ought, one would have thought, for a single night at least to have put out of mind and out of sight "All the Finals."

No sensible person will under-value the importance of promoting the physical as well as the intellectual health of the nation. With most people physical exercise increases life's happiness and life's efficiency, and the due practice of it is a very important factor in national efficiency. It makes for the well-being of the nation. It makes for manliness. A spontaneous and sincere zeal for athletic sports among young men and women is an admirable thing, and deserves encouragement. But its importance is capable of exaggeration.

Herbert Spencer himself was no enemy to games. He played billiards

with great regularity and enthusiasm, and found it a most satisfactory recreation. But there is a great deal of truth in his comment on the superior skill of a young gentleman, a casual hotel acquaintance, who completely out-matched him. "Young man," said the philosopher to his conqueror, "facility in a game is a desirable accomplishment; but the preternatural skill that you display gives evidence of a mis-spent life." As soon as a recreation is treated as a duty or a serious occupation, or, what is far worse, as a profession, as soon as it fills time—which it is to the health of the mind to devote to other pursuits—then its virtue departs. I will not say it at once becomes a vice, but its power for good is seriously abridged, and it sometimes develops into a power for evil. Reasonable devotion to sport is no bar—it is rather a spur—to intellectual culture. An exaggerated devotion to sport invariably means the neglect of intellectual culture. It dwarfs the mind.

The point is one to dwell on. In our schools and colleges athletics are clearly at the moment engrossing more attention than is consistent with national efficiency. Mr. Rudyard Kipling, who has used somewhat strong language about over-indulgence in cricket and football which I forbear to quote, suggested a day or two ago, that if one-tenth of the time that boys at our public schools are now practically compelled to devote to cricket and football were bestowed on drill and rifle-shooting, in a very few years an efficient citizen army would be formed in our midst. To that suggestion I will add another. If another tenth of the time that boys at our public schools are now practically compelled to devote to cricket or football were bestowed prudently, and under some system which gave free scope to the boys' individual tastes, if another tenth of their cricket and football time were bestowed prudently on the study of good, recreative, inspiring English literature, a body of trained intellectual literary opinion might very quickly come into existence, whereby the worth of literature would be appreciated, whereby its value as a national asset would be understood, whereby the national efficiency might be sensibly increased.

But there is something far worse, to my thinking, than the excessive practice of sport. It is bad for athletes to exaggerate the merit to be attached to excellence in athletic pursuits. But it is far worse, it is an unmitigated evil for men who are no athletes to devote themselves to sport in an exaggerated way, to devote themselves to sport *passively* rather than actively.

What should be said of the man who, being able to read, reads nothing else than sporting intelligence in the newspapers? What should be said of the man who, never having sat on a horse or had a cricket bat in his hand, will concentrate all the mental power that he possesses—it is not usually an abundant commodity—on cricket scores or the results of horse races? No trace of solid advantages that the reasonable and moderate practice of athletic sports engenders is discoverable in this mental absorption in mere records of sport. As a rule, the motive for this passive study of sporting results is very far removed from the good motive which may well inspire the active practice of sport. The motive for this passion for reading sporting news is the habit of betting. Betting is the customary cause of an unhealthily distended or distorted interest in sporting events. I have no particular objection to betting as a rare, an occasional dissipation. Speculation on the future is quite natural to man. It may, on occasion, be a stimulus to mental energy, but to speculate habitually—daily, and weekly—on future events of no rational importance in themselves, solely in the hope of benefiting one's own pocket and injuring another's pocket is, when it becomes a confirmed habit, a debasing occupation. It is an obstacle to one's mental development or efficiency;

and when it affects a large section of the population it hinders national progress and efficiency.

Those who spend any large proportion of their leisure in gambling and betting never read books of the kind that widen, or clarify, or elevate their views of life. They let "that capability and god-like reason" with which nature endowed them, "rust in them unused." If books can contribute, as I think they can, an infinite deal to national efficiency, then the immoderate devotion to sport and games, with their sinister concomitants of gambling and betting which extirpate all taste for literature, becomes an intolerable nuisance, and should be faced as a national evil. Books and betting—by books I mean good literature—are, as things are, serious rivals of one another, and betting is, I fear, the winner with the masses. It is curious to note that this petty vice of petty betting on sporting events, which infects all ranks of the English people—rich and poor alike—and diverts attention from the useful things of the mind, is hardly known in any other country—is hardly known in America or in Germany—the two countries who have long been our chief rivals in commercial and intellectual progress, and seems at the moment to be shooting ahead of us in the race. In both those countries the value of books, of literary study, as an element in national efficiency, is far better recognised than with us.

I can quote very high authority in support of my view that a really efficient citizen ought to repress undue passion for sport, and apportion at least some of his leisure to books, if he is to do his country any genuine service. Oliver Cromwell was, in practical affairs of life, as great a man as this country has produced. He was a great general and a great statesman, even if we hold the opinion that the means which he employed in gaining his ends were not always quite considerate to his foes. Now, Cromwell's eldest son, Richard, to his father's great disappointment, did not inherit his father's intellectual capacity. His interests were absorbed in sport; he was a persistent follower of the hounds; he was devoted to games. He was no great expert in these pursuits; he seems, in fact, to have been exceptionally clumsy, and often disabled himself by breaking limbs or suffering other bodily injury. On a moderate scale Cromwell was a sportsman himself. He was by no means averse to sport in moderation. But he was ambitious to found a family in England, and to make his son his successor as governor or protector of England; and his practical, his colossal common-sense taught him that no mere sportsman could prove equal to his great responsibilities. Therefore he bade his son Richard correct his mode of life. He warned him to repress what he called his "unactive vain spirit," that is to say, the sluggish and profitless exercise of such capacity as belonged to him. The cure that Cromwell prescribed is the thing to note in this connection. It was a steady course of reading. "Recreate yourself," he, in effect, told his athletic heir, "recreate yourself with books of some pith and moment." The book which Cromwell specially pressed on his son's notice was a history, the best history then in existence in the English language, Sir Walter Raleigh's "History of the World." "Do not scatter yourself over a great many short and comparatively trifling books," said this wise parent, "devote yourself to a long book, a book that takes a wide survey of human affairs, a book that is written in a great style." Sir Walter Raleigh's history satisfied all these conditions. "It's a body of history," said Cromwell, "and will add much more to your understanding than fragments of story." Snippets of fiction may be very easy to read, but would do the reader no particular good. No advice could be sounder than this which Cromwell gave his son, and the sequel is equally instructive. Richard Cromwell did not take his father's counsel; he went on spending all his time in hunting and in breaking his legs, and when he came in due time to succeed to his father's throne he proved

lamentably unequal to the position. Sport had given him no practical grip of the affairs of the world, and he beat a hasty and undignified retreat into private life; he went back to sport, and has left in history a name that is a synonym for all that is insignificant and contemptible. Although things came right in the end, and the restoration of the monarchy proved in the long run a blessing to England, Richard Cromwell's inability to profit by his father's enlightened teaching retarded for many years the progress of the nation, and for a long period inefficiency ruled the nation's councils. Had Richard Cromwell seen with his father's eyes the relation of books to national efficiency, English history of the seventeenth century would have taken a different turn.

Some people make the mistake of supposing that the practical men of the world can do better without books than with them. History rejects that assumption. Of all practical men the greatest are great generals. Books seem as far removed from military activity as from any sphere of human endeavour. Yet if you look into the matter you will find that every great general has admitted that he owes, at any rate, part of his success to reading. Napoleon had always at least one book in his knapsack, even in the most desperate crises of his military career. Caesar's "Commentaries," a book written, be it borne in mind, by possibly the greatest of all generals, was always near Napoleon's hand, in the camp, and, indeed, on the battle-field; that record of experience gave him perennial encouragement and hope, and contributed to his triumphs. Those who urge Army reform in England at the moment hold Napoleon's and Cromwell's views; they are recommending young officers to follow Napoleon's example, literary to read Caesar. The most enlightened critics of our recent military adventures in South Africa have attributed the many displays of inefficiency which characterised our conduct of the Boer war to the failure of our officers to appreciate the value of books, and their tendency to exaggerate the value of sport. Whatever may be one's occupation in life, it is the trained intellect that carries the day, and no intellect can be fully trained without constant recourse to books.

Happiness counts as something in national efficiency. Not mere unthinking contentment with one's lot. The mere sluggish and unresisting acceptance of the mediocre and humdrum conditions of existence to which we may be born is not happiness in any sound sense. But to be able on occasion to diminish the anxieties inevitable to the active exercise of one's faculties is incalculably advantageous.

To every man there comes at some time a season of sickness or of sorrow which cries for relief, and to few who know the value of books, and who have been accustomed to read them, is relief in such seasons wholly denied. It has been said that books can still or postpone the cravings of hunger. The great humorist, Thomas Hood, once wrote: "Generous mental food can even atone for too meagre diet—rich fare on the paper for short commons on the cloth."

But these are commonplaces with which I need not detain you. It will be obvious that, if books help to diminish inevitable griefs of life, at the same time as they stimulate us to avoid or correct the preventable evils of life, an argument of peculiar value is to be found there in support of the proposition that they contribute to national efficiency.

It now only remains for me to consider how to extend the taste for reading, and the opportunity for gratifying that taste among the people of this country. I am afraid I have no very novel or very revolutionary suggestion to make. There are a certain number of persons born with a natural taste for books, and with a more than ordinary dose of self-reliance and persistency in their composition, who will make for themselves opportuni-

ties of reading, however uncongenial their surroundings. These persons deserve all honour and encouragement: may their numbers grow!

I think no stories are really more thrilling for the intelligent reader than the narratives of early hardships which youths have cheerfully faced in order to satisfy an inborn passion for study. I always turn with interest to the autobiography of William Chambers, one of the greatest benefactors of the United Kingdom of the last century, by virtue of his strenuous efforts to disseminate good and cheap literature among the people of England and Scotland. At 14 years of age he, without any education to speak of, was thrown on his own resources, and managed to obtain the post of office boy at Edinburgh at the munificent salary of four shillings a week. In order to buy books he cheerfully went without food and without sleep. He narrates one very curious experience. Chance told him that near his lodgings lived a baker who was fond of reading, but was so immersed in his trade that he had no time to indulge his literary taste. Young Chambers suggested to the baker that he should visit the bakehouse every morning at five o'clock, and read to him while he baked his bread. The baker had two sons, who shared their father's proclivities; and Chambers' proposition was accepted on the terms that he was to read for two and a half hours each morning to this audience of three, and, apart from the benefit of light and warmth, he was to receive a roll for his breakfast. The arrangement worked admirably; the baker was catholic in his literary likings, though he preferred what was jocular to what was serious, and Chambers delighted him and his sons by reading to them the novels of Smollett and Fielding as well as "Gil Blas." The programme was occasionally varied by more serious literary sustenance. Every poor, hungry boy with a taste for reading may not be so fortunate as to meet with a literary baker. But no youth in a like position to Chambers can fail to be encouraged by his experience. Chambers in course of time became a great publisher, and a most industrious and useful writer. No man recognised more fully that books are a primary factor alike in individual and national efficiency.

Especially clearly did Chambers see that good books to be of great effect must be cheap. For it is far better to buy books than to borrow them, and, until wealth is differently distributed, the bulk of the population will not be able to buy expensive books.

But whether books be cheap or no, I believe that free public libraries are also essential to the spreading of the knowledge of books among the people at large. Hardly any student can acquire for himself so large a collection of books as to make himself independent of libraries. In some quarters there is a rooted objection to free libraries, or it may be, to libraries of any kind. I read recently in a newspaper report that an alderman in a wealthy metropolitan borough of the West of London said at a meeting of the Borough Council that was summoned to consider, and, as it turned out, to reject a handsome offer by Mr. Carnegie of a contribution to the expenses of building a free library for the Borough. I read in the newspaper that an alderman on this occasion remarked pleasantly enough that "he would not vote the jingle of a sixpence on a tombstone for a free library." This worthy alderman said he was in contact with local workmen and led his hearers to suppose that he loyally represented their views as well as his own. I doubt if this view be held widely among the working classes, but if it be held then the sooner it is dispelled the better for the country. The common jealousy of free libraries is the child of ruinous ignorance. The alderman's attitude is not a new one: most of you have probably read a play of Shakespeare called the "Second Part of Henry VI.," and recall the words Shakespeare places in the mouth there of a revolutionary leader named Jack Cade. Jack Cade was peculiarly hostile to anything in the

shape of books. In his short-lived reign of power he condemns to death a very worthy man for the offences of having employed the art of printing and for having built a paper mill. Jack Cade and his followers regarded books as injurious to the state, and, had he lived now, he would have urged that you and all champions of free libraries should be strung up on lamp-posts as enemies of the commonweal. Happily Jack Cade is dead, and his disciples are few and not in much credit. When we meet them let us stand up against them and convict them of error.

Free libraries like other good things are doubtless capable of misuse. The choice of books which they place at the disposal of their clients may not always be the best imaginable. Vapid novels and vapid periodicals may loom more largely on the shelves than is to the advantage of good taste in literature. But these defects can be corrected. The prejudice against all kinds of fiction that exists in some quarters is to my mind unworthy of serious attention. Great fiction, wholesome fiction, offers first-rate opportunities of recreation. It widens one's outlook on life, it strengthens one's sympathies with what is really admirable. There is no lack of great and wholesome fiction in the literature of our language, and I believe free libraries do an immense service by bringing that fact home to the people. Care and intelligence are doubtless required in the selection of books for general circulation. But I think a trained librarian will usually recognise his responsibilities and act up to them.

A very little experience teaches the valuable lesson that old books, books of established reputation in all branches of literature, are more profitable to the reader than new books. Literature, like wine, improves by keeping, and no one can be quite certain of its quality until one has had an opportunity of seeing how it wears. It is therefore safer for librarians to recommend their readers, especially when they are young, to recreate themselves with the novels of Sir Walter Scott, or of Dickens, or of Thackeray, or of Charlotte Brontë, or of George Eliot, rather than with more modern productions. The art of literature does not progress like mechanical inventions or political institutions. Familiarity with the great examples of the past is essential to the maintenance of popular taste and intelligence at a profitable level. Those whose daily occupation makes large demands on their time, can only hope to master a small part of English literature, and it is best for them to keep on the heights, to acquaint themselves with the obviously great examples of history and fiction, of poetry and drama, of which the number is very large and the departments very various.

Some means of giving general advice as to what is best to read might, I think, be fitly organised in connection with free libraries. But it is always desirable to offer readers a wide field of choice. Shakespeare's wise counsel should be always borne in mind:

"No profit grows where is no pleasure taken.
In brief, sir, study what you most affect."

If they are wisely treated, books will not only add to the pleasures of life; if they are rightly regarded, they will make readers more efficient citizens; they will increase the national efficiency. They will strengthen our capacity of meeting life's difficulties and life's dangers by widening our horizons and enlarging our experiences. They give new views of life and teach us how to live.

NEW MEMBERS.

Junior—

DODD, Mr. E. C., Highgate Branch, Hornsey Public Libraries.
SEARLE, Mr. S., Central Public Library, Shoreditch.

DISSOLUTION OF THE N.W.B.

MANCHESTER.

Jan. 15th, 1904.

To the Editor of the *Library Assistant*.

DEAR SIR,

Rightly or wrongly, the end of the above-named Branch strikes me as being as untimely as that of "Ginx's Baby," and can only be justified by a similar medley of circumstances as those which brought to a close the unpromising career of that much-abused child. Just as the moral in the story was pointed at Nobody in Particular, so, in looking around at the causes which conducted to the expiration of the N.W.B., one is bound to admit that, equally in particular, no one is to blame; and one is further led to wonder how an association that should have been of such service can quietly die out, hardly leaving so much as a ripple on the water to mark the place where it once had been! If we look at the assistants themselves we are bound to admit that though they may be subjected to abuse on occasion, still for the most part they are well-deserving individuals, and on the whole desirous for their own welfare and improvement in every direction. Again, one feels that absolutely the last persons to whom any blame whatever can be attached are the librarians, for they have proved time after time their willingness to oblige any association of library assistants; or, for the matter of that, any single assistant who has set himself out to gain knowledge on library affairs. What then, so far as the N.W.B. is concerned, is the root of the mischief? With all due respect to committees, they seem to be two: lack of time, and lack of money, on the part of assistants.

When the Branch was in existence, despite the most painstaking Secretary, supported by a zealous Committee, month after month passed by, with certain brilliant exceptions, and no thoroughly representative meetings seemed possible: at least, none occurred. So far as Manchester itself is concerned, its assistants have always been free in exchange of opinion amongst themselves relative to library affairs; but the lamentable fact had to be faced that assistants in the outlying districts found themselves, with the best intentions in the world, unable to afford the expense of attending meetings even when willing to give up their very often solitary night off during the week. This is no mere dream on my part, for it was once my official duty to take a survey of the hours worked by members of the Branch in the North, and the result worked out very unsatisfactorily so far as both Branch and assistants were concerned. Roughly speaking, they could only attend regularly *once every two months*, and this by the unbendable law of averages; but, alas! even that result was not obtained, and the Committee felt uncomfortable on many occasions for having trespassed upon the good nature both of librarians and committees of the places they visited. What, then, is to be the remedy for all this, apart from drastic and fundamental changes placing assistants on a similar footing with teachers? To put the question in its natural place—the existing state of things—I should say, let assistants all over the country form themselves into centres in towns of sufficient size, particularly since the tendency in many directions is now-a-days more and more towards decentralisation; similarly, where towns are not of sufficient size, let two or three group together to form a centre the objects of which would be to develop in every possible direction, keeping in touch with the Library Assistants' Association by means of the *Assistant* and such other means as could readily be determined upon from time to time. It seems to me that only in this direction can assistants hope to be in a position to dictate

or arrange their own requirements, so far as the *Assistant* is concerned, for the success of the paper would then depend upon its subscribers, if the Committee wished to retain non-London members. This is to be urged the more strongly since it is now an open secret that many subscribers to this journal are not satisfied with its present productions, perhaps—I do not know—by virtue of not understanding the difficulties of obtaining suitable material. But surely under such a system as that just sketched matter would supply itself? Local reports of healthy meetings up and down the country would make a wonderful difference to the anticipation with which the next number is at present regarded, for then the provincial assistants would be reading it in a special sense. Apart from this, the London Committee can do a great deal to help both outsiders and themselves by *energetically* inviting good articles on current matters of library, educational and topical interest. If the *Assistant* had been thought useful enough, I see no reason why the article by a "Sub-Librarian," entitled, "The Salary of Library Assistants," which appeared in the December number of the *Library World*, should not have appeared in this paper; but it did not. Surely, if we are only library assistants we can be intensely practical so far as our interests and work are concerned? What does the average assistant require more, month by month, but the intelligent understanding and appreciation of his own position and work in relation to his aspirations and ideals? If we must have an organ let us see to it that it plays us tunes of self-respect and independence rather than any humble apology for existence or doleful incantations on our own shortcomings. Sometimes I very much wonder whether we ever read Carlyle, Emerson, or Ruskin, or whether it is merely the nodding acquaintance generally attributed to borrowers.

In conclusion, let me plead with assistants for whole-hearted honesty with themselves, their occupation, and the circumstances helping or hindering their evolution; for after all, on what better basis than this can we run associations or any other organisations? Mr. Cowell, the Chief Librarian of the Public Libraries, Liverpool, in a letter to the Manchester assistants, thus summarises the objects for which any association of assistants ought to strive: "Keep yourselves posted in all the new ideas about library work, and if Mr. Sutton procures for inspection all the latest specimens of shelving, library furniture generally, library stationery, library plans, and library drawings, you will be to the forefront in your work. In the summer time a few excursions to neighbouring towns where there are up-to-date libraries would be worth many papers read at meetings. It is probable that you would see other methods of working which would be interesting, if not worth copying, and such differences give opportunities for criticism and discussion. You would see in almost any library you visited some books you had never seen before, and that, too, is something. Add to your bibliographical knowledge whenever you can. Don't bother about mediæval literature—the readers of free libraries want up-to-date books."

Yours, etc.,

F. W. B. HAWORTH.

THE COMMITTEE.

The Committee met at Headquarters on Wednesday, January 20th. Present:—Messrs. Rees (in chair), Coltman, Faraday, Harris, Hatcher, Hogg, Rivers, Roebuck, Savage, Smith, and Thorne.

In response to an invitation, Messrs. Savage and Smith were appointed to represent the L. A. A. on the Municipal Officers' Association.

Mr. Hogg moved:—"That the Branches Sub-Committee of this Association be dissolved and its members appointed to other sub-committees." The motion was not carried.

Mr. Hatcher moved:—"That a special sub-committee be formed to draw up a list of Standing Orders, or Rules of Procedure, for the guidance of the Officers and Committeemen." This was unanimously carried, and it was resolved that the Chairman and Officers and the Chairmen of the various sub-committees together with Messrs. Green and Smith, constitute this special committee.

Next meeting, February 17th, 1904: all matter to be brought forward must reach the Hon. Secretary by February 12th.

LIBRARY ASSOCIATION PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION.

The next Professional Examination will be held in the first week in May this year. The Council have, for some time past, had under revision the Syllabus of the examination. This is now finally approved, as far as five of the sections are concerned, viz.: Elements of Practical Bibliography; Classification; Cataloguing; Library History and Organisation; and Practical Library Administration.

Candidates are required to make application to Mr. H. D. Roberts, 44A Southwark Bridge Road, S.E., not later than March 1st, asking to be admitted to the examination, and stating in which of the sections they wish to present themselves. As far as possible centres will be arranged for the convenience of candidates. Candidates may present themselves in any or all of the sections. The syllabus will be ready shortly.

A new condition is that an essay is required in each of the sections. These are to be written at home, and given up at the time of the examination.

FINAL NOTICE *re* LATE N.W. BRANCH.

It is requested that those members of the late Branch who intend to maintain their membership of the Association make known their decision at once to the General Secretary, 236 Cable Street, London, E., so that arrangements can be made regarding the delivery of the Journal. Subscriptions will be accepted *pro rata* to end with the official year, viz.: September 30th, 1904. To those not replying in the affirmative no further Journals will be sent.